transport bottlenecks, adverse development in marketing, recession etc.

(d) The Government has taken a number of steps for reducing industrial sickness which, inter-alia, include guidelines of Reserve Bank of India to banks, amalgamation of sick units with healthy units, setting up of Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) under Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provision) Act, National Renewal Fund. National Equity Fund etc.

Industries Affected by Cyclone in Orissa

1115. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of large and medium industries affected by two cyclones swept over in Orissa during October last;

(b) the extent of losses sustained by each industry (both in public as well as private sector);

(c) the steps taken for the rehabilitation of those units; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) to (d) Recent cyclone in Orissa has damaged 44 salt works, covering an area of 2820 acres. Besides this, a quantity of 2300 tonnes of salt has been washed away.

With a view to rehabilitate the damage salt works, Salt Department has disbursed a sum of Rs. 19.314 lakh by way of ex-gratia relief to the affected salt manufacturers. This is in addition to several other labour welfare works sanctioned by the Salt Department in various salt factories.

Revival of Leather Industry

1116. SHRI SATISHCHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN- Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are any plans to revive leather industry; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) As a result of various schemes, plans and programmes already implemented/ initiated by the Government, the leather industry, of late, has shown signs of recovery, particularly in exports.

(b) Under the UNDP—assisted National Leather Development Programme, on-going Small Industries Development & Employment Programme in Leather Sector (SIDE-NLDP i.e. NLDP Phase-II), Leather Technology Mission (being executed by the Central Leather Research Institute under Council of Scientific and Industrial Research of the Ministry of Science and Technology), Plan Scheme, Indian Leather Development Programme, etc. various steps for integrated development of leather industry are being undertaken from time to time depending on the needs and requirement of the leather industry.

Protection of India's Bio-Diversity Plant Varieties

1117. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state the action taken to protect India's bio-diversity plant varieties and an agriculture policy that protects farmer's rights and sets a framework for imports and exports of agro-commodities?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): In order to protect the biodiversity of the country, the Government are formulating a legislation on biodiversity wit> the broad objectives of conservation and sustainable utilization of biodiversity and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of biological resources. Protection for plant varieties based on the criteria of distinctiveness, uniformity and stability, is proposed to be given under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Bill, 1999, which is likely to be introduced shortly in the Parliament. Under this law, nothing will affect the farmers' traditional rights to save, use, exchange, share and sell their farm produce of the protected variety except sale for resowing under commercial marketing arrangements. The Export-Import policy of agricultural products is governed principally by the concerns of India's food security, the maximizing of farm incomes, the need to earn foreign exchange and to augment domestic availability of agricultural products while protecting and providing avenues for rural employment.